

availability and potential tax revenues of the remaining land very important. Macon County's stronger tax base from its commercial uses and small communities along with a larger resource of developable land and an active citizenry has allowed the county more flexibility. Macon County has adopted a resolution that suggests that farmland may be better for the local tax base, in the long term, than new residential development because it requires very few municipal services. Both Counties, following trends found in many Appalachian counties, place a high value on private property rights and are resistant to adopting land management regulations and zoning regulations.

2. Study Area

Demographic Study Area - (shown in purple and yellow on **Figure 5**.) The demographic study area is made up of the smallest number of existing Census areas that include the direct community impact area. The demographic area for this project includes Census Tract 9702, Block Group 2 in Macon County, and Census Tract 9603, Block Group 6 in Swain County. The Census Block Groups in the area are large in area but relatively small in population. The Demographic Area includes around 160,000 acres of land. Of this acreage, 74%, or over 130,000 acres, is owned by agencies of the Federal Government. The census statistics in the area describe the characteristics of the population living in the remaining 39,000 acres. This area is still very large compared to the direct community impact area but will provide adequate insight on area trends. In the report, the selected block groups will be consolidated into the overall demographic area, but will be looked at separately if notable differences occur in certain block groups.

Direct Community Impact (DCI) Area – (shown outlined in red on **Figure 6**.) The direct community impact area for this project attempts to incorporate all parts of the community that will be impacted by project construction. This area includes the uses along Needmore Road's right of way and the uses, primarily residences, that use the route as the only or a primary means of access. The Direct Community Impact Area extends from the intersection of Tellico Road and Lower Burningtown Road in the south, along Needmore Road to the intersection of Needmore Road and Licklog Road in the north. The Direct Community Impact Area contains approximately 1,800 acres.

3. Methodology

This Community Effects analysis outlines the existing conditions and trends of the area around the project, and predicts the likely impacts of the project on the area and on the inhabitants of the area. This document includes data gathered from the US Census merged with data from local plans and maps, and observations from field visits. Resources, including, NCDOT project staff, local staff, and specific research information were used to reasonably predict the most likely impacts. In compliance with the federal guidelines on community impact assessments, this document includes, where applicable, recommendations for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of the impacts expected and predicted in the report. It also addresses, where applicable, possible enhancements that could be added to the project to lessen the effect of these impacts.

4. Community Characteristics

The area around the project is important in the history of the eastern band of the Cherokee (addressed in more detail in Section VII, B. of this document) and has a history of rural simple, but self-sufficient farming. Two rural communities are located in this area: Stiles, centered at the